
The Case of Charles G. Francklyn and His Perfin

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Perforated initials or insignia, commonly called PERFINs in philatelic circles, are made by a series of perforating pins arranged in a device in such a fashion as to form a design unique to the person or entity to which it belongs and once punched into the face of a stamp securely identifies that stamp as belonging to that user, thereby discouraging pilferage.

In Great Britain in the 1860s there were no such things as postal money orders and people often resorted to sending small sums of money through the mail in the form of unused postage stamps. The British Post Office knew this and made a practice of buying back unused postage stamps from the public. This knowledge and the temptation that it engendered proved too great for some messengers and office clerks, who pilfered postage stamps from their employer's

stocks and resold them to the post office, thereby supplementing their meager incomes. It must be remembered, in those days even a penny had real buying power. Sometime in the 1860s one Joseph Sloper made a proposal to the British Post for permission to perforate stamps with distinctive initials or designs for security purposes. Permission was slow in coming and some stamps were perfinned and used without official permission.

The first Sloper perfins appeared in 1867 and were used by the London drapery firm of Copestake, Moore & Crampton. The indicia used were the letters S.C., which were the initials of a member of that firm. Sloper had jumped the gun in anticipation of having the scheme approved. He was wrong and the British Post was quite angry.



Figure 1: The B.F. Cummins Co. cover bearing a perfinned copy of the 1903 definitive used May 26, 1908, from Chicago. This is the second oldest U.S. perfin usage recorded. Courtesy Paul H. Gault.

However, in the wake of a major theft of postage, Sloper's compelling arguments and the backing of large postal consumers, the postal authorities relented and perfinns were officially sanctioned in 1868. Sloper held the patent on the stamp security perforator and initially would supply the stamps to the users perfinned to order on a contract basis. This way he controlled the use of the device and thereby the profits. He decided that he could make more money doing it this way than by selling the perforator and allowing the individual firm to do the job themselves. Sloper did quite well until 1872 when his British patent expired. After that his competitors cut heavily into his business.

Perfinns caught on quickly however in other parts of the world. Belgium approved their use in 1872 and in 1878 Denmark, France, Germany and Switzerland followed. It was not until May 7, 1908, however, that perfinns were finally sanctioned by the United States Post Office Department.

The first American postal perfinns were made on a device manufactured by the B.F. Cummins Company of Chicago, Illinois. Figure 1 illustrates a Cummins covers bearing both their perforated corner card and a 2¢ carmine postage stamp of the 1903 issue (Scott 319) bearing the perfinned letters BFC/Co. in two lines. The May 26, 1908, date in the cancellation represents the second earliest recorded usage of a perfinned postage



Figure 2: The author's discovery copy found with piece of a passage ticket, \$3 Third Issue, Scott R147.

stamp in the United States.

Having reviewed the history of the perfin and the earliest use on postage stamps in the United States, the question arises, what is the earliest recorded use of a perfin security device on a U.S. revenue stamp? It is the purpose of this article is to answer that question.

About five or so years ago I acquired a \$3 Third Issue documentary stamp (Scott R147) illustrated herein as Figure 2. I was amazed that it bore set of perforated initials C G F being in overall size about 23 1/2 mm long by 8 mm high. (See Figure 3.)

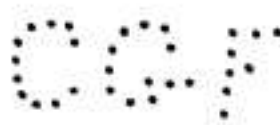


Figure 3: The C.G. Francklyn perfin design.

The perforation holes were the same size as the gauge 12 perforations used by the Philadelphia printer Joseph R. Carpenter which produced the stamp itself. Fortunately there was also a reasonably well-struck blue, double oval ribbon-dater cancellation reading: C.G. FRANCKLYN MAY / 21 1872 / 4 BOWLING GREEN, N.Y. Figure 4 illustrates the cancel traced from the \$2 Mortgage (Scott R82c) shown in Figure 5 which



Figure 4: The C.G. Francklyn double oval ribbon cancel known thus far only in blue. This tracing was made from the \$2 Mortgage, Scott R82c, shown in Figure 5.

was without perfin. A piece of paper clung to the reverse of the stamp that gave every indication of being a piece of the original document. This piece of document, however, was not perforated. If it was indeed a piece of the original document it would prove beyond any doubt that rather than being a mere punch cancellation that the perforated initials were a true security device.

If this was the case, then it would predate the first U.S. postal perfin by 36 years and would have been only 5 years after the Sloper experiment in Great Britain.

Figure 5: \$2 mortgage bearing well-struck Francklyn cancel. Note: no perfin and no cut cancel. This represents the earliest Francklyn cancel recorded by the author.



Figure 6: The piece of Cunard Line passage ticket found on the back of the stamp illustrated in Figure 2.

Carefully, I soaked the paper away from the stamp to reveal what is shown herewith in Figure 6. Clearly it was a piece of a passage ticket of the Cunard Steamship Line. The ticket was printed in

red (Cunard) and navy blue (The British) on white paper and was the thickness of slick heavyweight stationery of the period. Figure 7 shows a Cunard ticket issued in 1862 shortly before the imposition

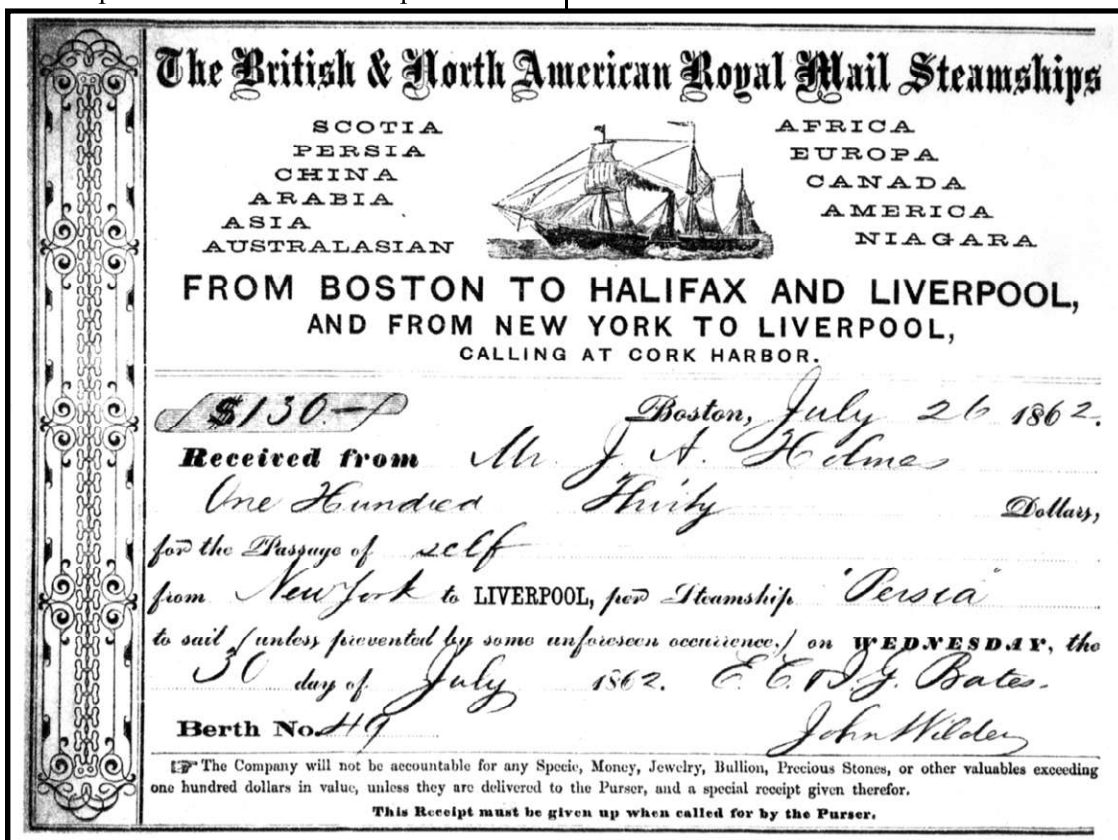


Figure 7: 1862 Cunard passage ticket used shortly before the imposition of the Civil War stamp tax. The piece of ticket in Figure 6 came from a ticket that probably looked much like this.

of the Civil War revenue stamp tax. Note that the actual corporate name was The British and North American Mail Steamship Company, a rather grandiose title. Is it any wonder that it was usually referred to merely as the Cunard Line?

Figure 8: *Francklyn perfin placed horizontally on \$2 Third Issue, Scott R145. Cancel dated FEB 25 1872.*



It is not presently known whether the Commissioner of Internal Revenue gave official sanction to this perfin as no reference can be found in the law, regulations or decisions of the time. In all likelihood no permission was sought and the usage probably never came to the attention of any revenue collector or other official. Within months of the dates on the perfinned stamps all of the documentary taxes,



Figure 9: *\$2 Third Issue bearing perfin and cancel dated APR 17 1872.*

save the Bank Check tax, were repealed and at that point the issue would have become moot.

Other Francklyn cancellations have been noted in Table 1. Inasmuch as no perfin has been found earlier than February 25, 1872, and a Francklyn cancel is known on a stamp without perfin as late as January 16, 1872, it seems safe to assume that the perfin came into use between those two dates. Perhaps this window can be narrowed a bit if readers of this piece will refer to their collections and report their findings in print.

All of the Francklyn cancellations found by the author thus far are on stamps denominated either

Table 1: *Known Francklyn cancellations.*

Face Value	Description	Scott Catalog	Cancel Date	Colorless Cut Cancel	Face Perfin	Back Perfin
\$2	Mortgage	R82c	Apr. 16, 1870			
\$2	Conveyance	R81c	May 4, 1871	•		
\$3	2 nd Issue	R125	Nov. 6, 1871	•		
\$3	2 nd issue	R125	Nov. 7, 1871	•		
\$2	2 nd issue	R123	Dec. 4, 1871	•		
\$2	2 nd issue	R123	Jan. 6, 1872	•		
\$2	2 nd issue	R125	Jan. 11, 1872	•		
\$2	2 nd issue	R123	Jan. 16, 1872	•		
\$2	3 rd issue	R145	Feb. 25, 1872	•	•	
\$2	3 rd issue	R145	Feb. 25, 1872	•	•	
\$3	3 rd issue	R147	Apr. 17, 1872	•	•	•
\$3	3 rd issue	R147	May 21, 1872			

\$2 or \$3. This should not be considered unusual. The rates on passage tickets applied to voyages from the United States to any foreign port with the exception of those situated in British North America. The rates originally enacted in 1864 still applied in 1871-2 and were as follows:

Ticket Price up to \$35.00	\$.50
Over \$35.00 to \$50.00	\$ 1.00
Each added \$50.00 or fraction	\$ 1.00

It was also possible to book the passage of more than one person on a single ticket.

Figure 10 is a Cunard Line advertisement which appeared in the New York Times on April 17, 1872.

SHIPPING.

CUNARD LINE.

THE BRITISH AND NORTH AMERICAN
ROYAL MAIL STEAM-SHIPS,
BETWEEN NEW-YORK AND LIVERPOOL,
CALLING AT CORK HARBOR.
FROM NEW-YORK.

CHINA.....	Wednesday, April 17, '72
RUSSIA.....	Wednesday, April 24, '72
CUBA.....	Wednesday, May 1, '72
SCOTIA.....	Wednesday, May 8, '72
JAVA.....	Wednesday, May 15, '72
CALABRIA.....	Saturday, April 20, '72
ABYSSINIA.....	Saturday, April 27, '72
BATAVIA.....	Saturday, May 4, '72
ALGERIA.....	Saturday, May 11, '72
PARTHIA.....	Saturday, May 18, '72

and every following WEDNESDAY and SATURDAY from New-York.

RATES OF PASSAGE.
Cabin, \$80, \$100 and \$130, gold, according to accommodation.
Tickets to Paris, \$15, gold, additional.
Return tickets on favorable terms.
Steerage.....\$30, currency.
Steerage tickets from Liverpool and Queenstown and all parts of Europe at lowest rates.
Through Bills of Lading given for Belfast, Glasgow, Havre, Antwerp, and other ports on the Continent, and for Mediterranean ports.
For freight and cabin passage apply at the Company's Office, No. 4 Bowling-green.
For steerage passage at No. 111 Broadway, Trinity Building.
CHAS. G. FRANCKLYN, Agent.

PASSENGERS PER STEAM-SHIP
CHINA embark from the Cunard Wharf, foot of Grand-st., Jersey City, at 1 P. M. on WEDNESDAY, April 17.
CHAS. G. FRANCKLYN,
No. 4 Bowling-green, New-York.

Figure 10: Cunard Shipping Line shipping notice as it appeared in the April 17, 1872 edition of the New York Times.

The cabin rates from New York to Liverpool were \$80 (tax \$2), \$100 (tax \$2) and \$130 (tax \$3) in gold according to the nature of the cabin's size and amenities. Tickets to Paris were an additional \$15. Note that steerage passages were \$30 and could only be purchased at 111 Broadway in the Trinity

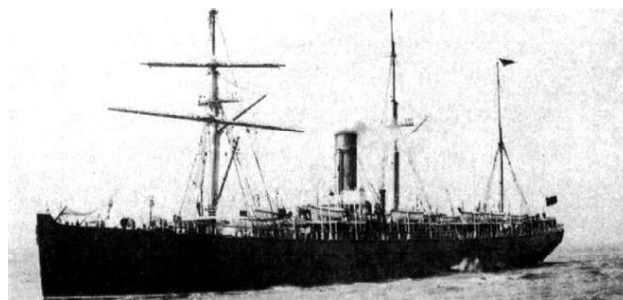


Figure 11: Photograph of Cunard steamer S.S. Bothnia, circa 1874.

ESTABLISHED 1840.

1876. CUNARD LINE. 1876.

NOTICE.

With the view of diminishing the chances of Collision, the Steamers of this Line take a specified course for all seasons of the year.
On the Outward Passage from Queenstown to New York or Boston, crossing Meridian of 80 at 43 Lat., or nothing to the North of 43.
On the Homeward Passage, crossing the Meridian of 50 at 42 Lat., or nothing to the North of 42.

THE BRITISH AND NORTH AMERICAN

Royal Mail Steamships

BETWEEN
LIVERPOOL, BOSTON, AND NEW YORK,
Calling at Cork Harbor.

THREE SAILINGS EVERY WEEK.

ABYSSINIA, ALEPPO, ALGERIA, ATLAS, BATAVIA,	BOTHNIA, CALABRIA, CHINA, CUBA, HECLA,	JAVA, KEDAR, MAITA, MARATHON, MOROCOO,	OLYMPES, PANTHYA, RUSSIA, SCYTHIA,	SAMARIA, SARAGOSSA, SCOTIA, SCYTHIA,	STERIA, SIDON, TARIFA, TRINIDAD.
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RATES OF PASSAGE.

<p>From Liverpool to New York or Boston.</p> <p>By Steamers not Carrying Steerage.</p> <p>First Class, \$20</p> <p>Second Class, 18</p> <p>By Steamers Carrying Steerage.</p> <p>First Class, 15, 17 and 21 Guinea,</p> <p>According to Accommodation.</p>	<p>From New York or Boston to Liverpool.</p> <p>First Class, \$80, \$100 and \$130, Gold</p> <p>According to Accommodation.</p> <p>Return Tickets issued on favorable Terms.</p> <p>Children between two and twelve years of age, half fare.</p> <p>Tickets to Paris, \$15 Gold, additional.</p> <p>Steerage Passengers at very low rates.</p>
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Passengers Booked to and from all parts of Europe at Very Low Rates.

EUROPEAN AGENCIES.
D. & G. MAC IVER.....8 Water St., Liverpool
D. & G. MAC IVER.....Fitzpatrick's Quay, Queenstown
D. & G. MAC IVER, 9 St. Peter's Place, Bishopsgate St., and 28 Pall Mall, London.
G. & J. BURNS.....35 Jamaica St., Glasgow
G. & J. BURNS.....Baltic St., Dundee
BURNS & MAC IVER.....12 Place de la Bourse, Paris
BURNS & MAC IVER.....22 Quai d'Orleans, Havre
J. HARTMAN & CO.....Antwerp

AMERICAN AGENCIES.
WILLIAM CUNARD.....Halfax, Nova Scotia
FOHRES & LOWENBROUGH.....Toronto, Canada
JAMES ALEXANDER.....50 State St., Boston
JAMES HOGAN.....339 Chestnut St., Philadelphia
P. H. DU VERNET.....Cor. Clark & Randolph Sts., Chicago, Ill.
CRUMB & WASHINGTON.....Cleveland, Ohio
H. MATTHEWSON & CO.....St. Paul, Minn.

CHARLES G. FRANCKLYN,
4 Bowling Green, NEW YORK.

Figure 12: 1876 Cunard advertisement.

Building, due north of the Bowling Green offices. Steerage was inferior accommodations deep below cabin decks, so named because they were near the operational decks with all the noise and lack of clean air or sunlight. It becomes clear that Cunard did not want the less desirable steerage passengers appearing at the posh, upscale Bowling Green cabin and freight agency offices. (See Figures 13 and 14.)

Just where did Francklyn get his perfin-making device? Assuming the perforating was done in-



Figure 13: Bowling Green looking south. Circa 1898. The Cunard agency building is the one at left with the horse and wagon in front.

house and not contracted out, he may have acquired a Sloper device. This is probably a safe bet for if there were a person doing security perforating stamps on a contract basis one would expect to see many more and varied devices on the revenue stamps of the era. This is just not the case. Sloper applied for an American patent for a perforating machine on February 6, 1874. (See Figures 15 and 16.) This may be the same device for which his British patent had expired in 1872. In any case it appears that Francklyn acquired a Sloper security perforator or a clone thereof. Inasmuch as neither the Boston ticket agency operated by James Alexander, the Philadelphia agency operated by James Hogan, the Cleveland agency operated by Crumb & Baslington nor the Chicago agency operated by P.H. Du Vernet used a perfin security device on its revenue stamps, we must conclude that the concept was born not with the Cunard Line but with Francklyn himself. Exactly what the inspiration was we may never know. Perhaps it was a theft of his stamps. In any case Charles G. Francklyn must go down in philatelic history as the father of the perfin in the United States.

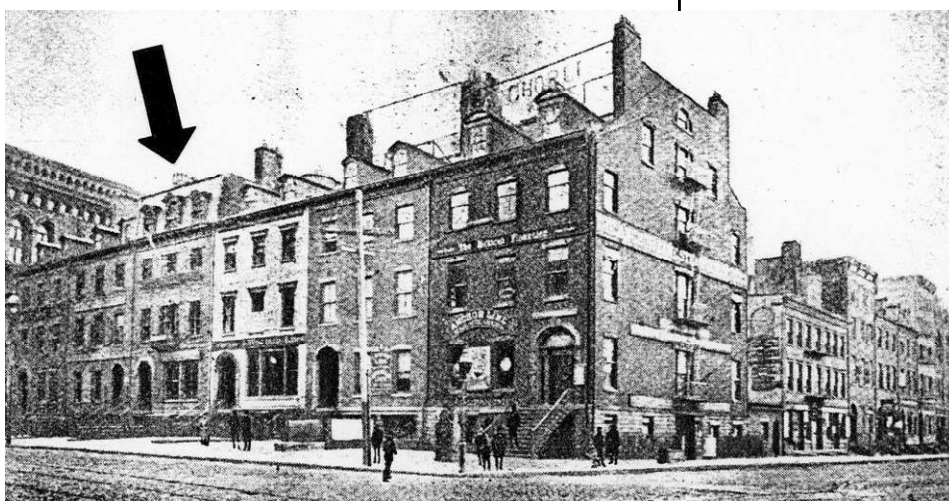


Figure 14: Row of shipping agency offices at Bowling Green and State Street as they appeared in the nineteenth century. The arrow identifies No. 4 where the Cunard Agency was located for many years.

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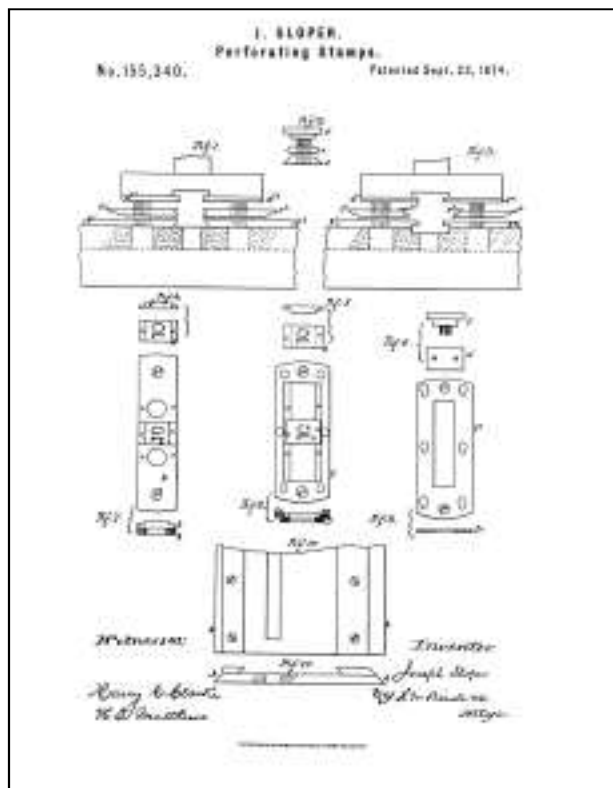


Figure 15: Page 1 of Sloper U.S. patent drawing

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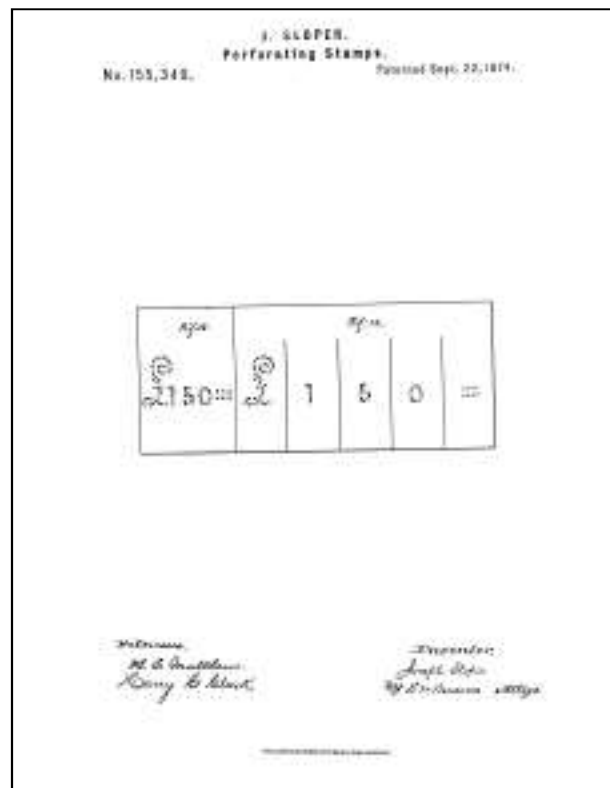


Figure 16: Page 2 of Sloper U.S. patent drawing

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